

SHIFTING GEARS

THE CHANGING MEANING OF WORK IN MASSACHUSETTS, 1920-1980

GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS

INTERVIEWEES: Ann & Patrick Donegan

INTERVIEWER: Martha Norkunas

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TRANSCRIBER: Annette Maylin (partial)

Interview April 22, 1988 with Anne and Patrick Donegan, 510 Pearl St.

Interviewer: Martha Norkunas

Q: How did you end up in Gardner? Your family?

Anne A: My father came from Lithuania and my mother and they met. I guess that they had friends out here. I don't know if there was any love or anything, I mean, if they saw a woman from Lithuania, they'd all try to please her, and which pleased her the most, they get married, but I don't think there was any love, they were very mpoor. They bought a house in Gardner and they got married. Th My mother was doing some housework, I think she was getting two dollars a week and the woman that she was working for, they didn't hardly feed her anything 'cuz if they get a bunch of foreigners, they don't know any better. Well, when she got married, they bought this hosue for . . . and they both went to work, my father went to work, I think six days a week for \$7 a week.

QQ: Where did he work?

Anne A: He worked at some factory. That was something we never talked about. And then he worked for Brazel's, that was a barroom and he used to make soda and then he bought a place in Templeton and he opened up a barroom. He had that for thirty years and I got involved in that too. He sold that and there was an article in the paper . . .

Patrick A: He worked at Heywood to get in on that Social Security. He worked ten years which was the minimum.

Q: Oh, because he couldn't get social security from his own barroom?

Patrick

A: No, he had to work forty quarters to get into Social Security. When he started getting it it wasn't too much--\$88 a month. He wasn't paying much. Let's see, that was in 1938-1948, you see at that time there wasn't that much money being taken out of Social Security, not it's a little over 7 and a 1/4 percent. But Roosevelt ~~at~~ started this thing in 1937, I think it was only half of one percent or one percent and each year it kept going up little by little. Nowadays, when people retire, they get much more.

Q: So he sold the barroom and started to work at Heywood?

Anne

A: He had the barroom and he was still working, 'cuz business wasn't too good at the beginning .

Patrick

a: But that was the only reason he went to Heywood, to qualify for Social Security.

Q: But he was at Heywood when he still owned his own business?

Patrick

A: And after working at Heywood, he would go down to Brazel's to make the soda from four o'clock to six ~~o~~ o'clock.

Q: OH, SO HE HAD THREE JOBS?

Anne

A: Yeah, they weren't paying too much, you know.

Anne

A: They bought this place in Templeton, it was a Lithuanian who used to own it and I guess he used to make moonshine and he hated my father, I don't know why, everybody seemed to love my father, and lo and behold, he bought it with his brother George, the old bachelor for \$700. But it was burned-down, they had to fix it up. In those days, they were selling a quart of beer for 25 cents, there was not much profit and I wouldn't want to run a barroom now, cuz of the characters they have know. It was more like a family affair, the same ones came in every weekend, with the children and my mother was a tyrant and you don't do the way she wants and out you go.

Q: OH, SO SHE WAS THE BOSS, THE BOUNCER.

Anne A: She was the boss! So it was more or less of a family affair, then on weekends, we used to get a lot of people from Boston. They had camps from Athol or Orange or someplace like that. Like in October, for the leaves and all, you'd always get a certain class of people.

Q: DID YOU SERVE FOOD TOO?

Anne A: When we felt ~~XX~~ like it. Sandwiches, hot dogs, westerns and easterns, lot of pickled eggs, potatoe chips and peanuts and pigs feet, pigs hearts, but as far as going into food, no, there was too much work, and we couldn't have any extra ~~fe~~ help, because everybody, ~~no~~ my mother never trusted anybody, she was the old-fashioned kind. The people who first came here from Lithuania, they had it pretty f rough.

Q: DID HTYE LEARN ENGLISH?

Anne A: My father went to school for a while, you see, he worked for Brazel and they were Irish, so there was no way of him not learning English, so he talked and he read. But my mother, she used to talk English, but we couldn't make her write and her sisters, they knew how to write, but we just couldn't make her, but they made it, every darn one of them, they had a home, there was no welfare then.

Anne Q: SO SHE HAD HER SISTERS HERE IN GARDNER?

A: Oh yeah, Miss Janickus and Francis Balticus, see they're all dead now. My aunt, her sister, Frances, her husband committed suicide, and she had four ~~kids~~ children, and when he committed suicide, she ~~did~~ didn't have any money at all. They left her broke, the kids were small, you can't get any help from the city or town, so my mother loaned her s-m-e money so that she wouldn't lose her home. And she had four children, she bought a cow~~when~~.

Anne A: went to work at Conan and Ball first, then Nichols and Stone, made these rush seats . . .

Q: COULD YOU DESCRIBE THEM?

Anne A: You weave them. They're a four-sided seat. She ~~will make~~ milked the cows before she went to work and she'd make cheese, she'd make her own butter, and there was a Swedish camp right across the street by the lake & where her husband committed-you know, drowned himself and she went on, she bought land, the three children live there now, they all have land.

q; AND SHE WAS BORN IN LITHUANIA?

Anne A: Yes, she was the baby sister, she was very, very nice, she was always jolly, always smiling, she got along beautifully with everybody. But my mother and her never got along, they were opposites.

q; WAS HE BURIED IN THE CATHOLIC CEMETERY EVEN THOUGH HE COMMITTED SUICIDE?

Anne A: Oh yes, they're all buried. We ~~by~~ bought a lot there and my Aunt Salome, that's my father's sister, maybe five or six monuments down, and then my Aunt Balticus, they're all in that little section, that's St. John's cemetery.

Q: BECAUSE I KNOW THAT IN LOWELL, THEY USED TO PUT THE PEOPLE WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE IN A PARTICULAR PLACE.

Anne A: I don't know what they did with my uncle.

Q: ~~IT~~ THIS WAS A LONG TIME AGO. THEY CALLED IT "SUICIDE GATE." I interviewed the cemetery director. But of course, if you're walking through the cemetery, you don't know

Patrick A: Well, that's the Catholic Church, they have their rules. To me, it's foolish.

Anne Q: Well, my aunt ~~is~~ is not buried with him. Well, she didn't have any money really to bury him.

Anne A: She did the best she could. See, he worked in the paint shop and what happened, he started to drink that de-natured alcohol and that made him really bad. . .

QW WAS THAT (THE PAINT SHOP) AT HEYWOOD?

Anne A: No, I think it was Bent Brothers. He never worked at Heywood. ~~He~~ He was a good-looking guy, but . . . liquor. You see, in those days there was no moonshine ~~but~~, but after a while, everybody's making moonshine down the ~~patch~~ patch.

Q: WAS THAT THE LITHUANIANS?

Anne A: Lithuanians and Polish. Some Italians too. Well, the Irish were there and then the Poles and Lithuanians came down to the patch and then the Dutch.

Q: DID THE IRISH MOVE OUT WHEN THE POLISH AND LITHUANIANS MOVED IN?

Anne A: Oh yeah, they took off to better . . . but there aren't too many Irish in Garnder anyway. (Patrick: Only the good ones are left.)

Anne A: When I was about eleven, they bought a house on the hill, Grant Street, do you know where Washington hill is? And we were resented and we were called Polacks by the Finns and the Swedes. The whole hill was Swedes and Finns and they didn't like the idea of the Polacks coming in. But the Swedes and the Finns moved away and then the Poles and the Lithuanians took off, I mean, it's funny how cycles go..

Q: YEAH, ESPECIALLY IN NEIGHBORHOODS LIKE THAT. WHY DID THEY CALL IT THE PATCH?

Anne A: The Irish patch. You see, there was all Irish in those days.

Patrick A: That's why they called it Dublin Street, Limerick Street, Emerlad Street.

Anne A: Well, all the Irish congregated there. I don't think there are any there now.

Q: IS THERE AN IRISH CHURCH IN GARDNER?

Anne A: Oh yah, that's where we got married and my three boys were baptized.

Anne Q: AT THE IRISH CHURCH? Did you CONVERT TO "IRISH"?

A:: You don't have to. I mean, all the Lithuanians went. They k<sup>o</sup>cked all the Lithuanians out of the Polish church. Well, the Polish priest, Frather Chapowsky, well, he liked his liquor, and one day he got up ~~o~~ in the pulpit and he told all the Lithuanians to get the hell ~~out~~ out of his church! So we all went to Sacred Heart church.

Q: WHEN WAS THIS?

Anne A: Oh, a good many years ago. I must have been about--cuz I made my First Communion at Sacred Heart Church--, so it was quite a good long while ago.

Q: DURING THE 1940s or 30s?

Anne A: Oh no, before taht. So that's why all the Lithuanians went to the Sacred Heart Church.

Q: DID THEY HAVE TO ASK THE PRIEST IS THEY COULD ATTEND?

Anne A: No, they just went.

Patrick A: Just put money in the basket.

Q: What was his problem iwth the Lithuanians?

Anne A: Well, the Polish are superior to the Lithuanians, that's what they say.

Patrick A: Well, the Polish and the Lithuanians never got along. The Polish thought that they were better than the Lithuanians and the L.thuanians thought that they were better than the Polish, that was years back, but not it doesn't mkae any difference anyway.

Q: THAT'S FUNNY, BECAUSE OUTSIDERS LUMP THEM TOGETHER.

A: Well, you're not going to call a Polack a Lithuanian or a Lithuanian a Polack, you see there's a lot of Polish people in Gardner, they have ~~their~~ their own Polish country club and the Lithuanians on the other side.

Q: DO THE LITHUANIANS HAVE THEIR OWN CLUB?

A: Yes, well, they used to.

A: They're on the same coin, but on opposite ends. The Lithuanian camp is on West Broadway, and then to get to the Polish camp you go off of West Broadway around the other side of the lake.

Q: BUT DO THEY HAVE A LITHUANIANS' CITIZENS CLUB?

Anne A:: They used to have it, and that was on Main Street. But as well, they were getting older and the younger generation didn't want to take over and I'll tell you, Lithuanians never had too many children, 'cuz I was the only one, and my father's sister, she only had two boys and then my mother's sister, she only had that one son, I mean, they didn't have big families, so eventually, there were not that many Lithuanians in Gardner, so the ~~people~~ people who are congregating now at the Lithuanian club are French. French is keeping that club going.

Q: BUT IT STILL HAS THE LITHUANIAN CLUB NAME?

Patrick A: Well, the Lithuanians are running it. We belong to it and every year--they ask for--we give ten dollars to keep that club going. Lot of people don't do it.

Q: WHAT'S IT CALLED NOW?

A: Lithuanian Country Club.

Anne Have you met Billy Vishnoskis. Oh, he was the one, he married a woman from Worcester, he was late in life when he got married, he's a very devout Catholic.



A: She's Lithuanian also. He's like this big wheel at this church in Athol--St. Casmir's Church in Athol.

Q: IS THAT ROMAN CATHOLIC?

Anne A: Yes. There's a lot of Lithuanians in Athol. They've got their own church, I don't know about the club now. Frank Janitis, he died, and he was very active in Athol with the priest and all that. And Bill ~~Wishnostkis~~ Wishnostkis, he knows everything, if you want to know anything about Lithuania, ~~ask him~~ he knows it. His folks used to run the bakery.

Q: I'LL WRITE DOWN HIS NAME AFTERWARD.

Anne A: HE's quite a talker.

Q: HOW DID YOU TWO MEET?

Anne A: Well, he came from Wakefield, outside of Boston, and they shut down Heywood-Wakefield in Wakefield and a lot of the people were transferred from Wakefield to Gardner.

Q: WHEN WAS THAT?

Patrick A: 1931. I was the last one to go, because I had to take care of all the big motors, all the material and make sure it was loaded on the trucks and the truck drivers signed the bill of lading. I was really the last one to go. But they did promise some kind of job in Gardner to the ones who were working in Wakefield, if they wanted to come out.

Q: WAS IT A BIG PLANT IN WAKEFIELD?

Patrick A: Oh yes, they hired over 12, 1300. But the Depression came along and they couldn't run the Gardner plant and the Wakefield plant and then they had another small plant in Winter Hill, that's part of Somerville, that's about 4 or 5 miles outside of Boston, north.

Q: Did THEY PERFORM SIMILAR OPERATIONS IN WAKEFIELD AS IN GARDNER?

A: Well, in Wakefield they made the railroad car seating, that was big business. They made carriages, they made these small little doll chairs.

Q: WHAT DID YOU DO THERE?

Patrick

A:: I was in the office, first the shipping office~~##~~ and then I went into the cost department for two and a half years and then as things started getting bad, they put me back in my old job, in the shipping office adn finally they couldn't jsut handle both plants, so . . .

Q: SO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DEPRESSION, ALL THES PEOPLE WERE OUT ON THE STREET?

Patrick

A: It took us almost three hours to get up from Wakefield on those old back roads. I'd never heard of Gardner before.

Q: DID YOU COME BY YOURSELF? (A: (Anne) Model T)

Patrick

A: And then pretty soon, then knew I was leaving Saturday and coming back Monday morning, early, and they asked if I'd give them a ride, so I did. And then I fianlly got a room in Gardner by Crystal Lake--paid \$3 a week-- and pretty soon my brother came up and we got a room for \$4, \$2 a piece. I was there for three and a half years before she hookèd me. (Anne: We went for three years before we got married.)

Q: Did you MEET AT THE CHURCH?

Patrick

A: No, we met ~~##~~ at Heywood-Wakefield, at the factory. She worked almost nine years at Heywood0Wakefield in the office, billing? Paperwork, all that.

Q:: DID THAT HAPPEN OFTEN, THAT PEOPLE MET AT THE COMPANY?

Anne

A: Oh sure, cuz there was no other social things going on in Gardner, there was nothing. Well, we had Arcadia, a big dance ~~##~~ hall, course it's gone now, but outside of that, there

was nothing going on, if we wanted to have a ?, we'd go to Boston or to Worcester, of course in those days, there weren't too many cars on the road, I wouldn't go to Boston for love or money now, I'd get lost, 'cuz when we brought out young son to college, we got lost, remember?

Patrick A: Well, ~~first~~ the streets that I was used to, Boston to Wakefield is only ten miles, a lot of the streets that I used to know, they made them one way.

Q: BUT THEY DON'T TELL YOU THEY'RE ONE-WAY ON THE MAP.

A: THEY don't tell you. Until you get there.

Anne A: Until you get there. ~~first~~ You're right on top of it, first thing you know, you're going right by.

It was all right driving before, because there weren't too many cars, but now, it's bumper to bumper, that's why I'm so glad now, when we go to see our son in Maryland, we go out of Worcester, it's really wonderful. The last we went, we hired a limousine to go to Logan Airport

Q: Oh, WORCESTER HAS AN AIRPORT? WE JUST MOVED BACK IN FEBRUARY.

Anne A: You know the Stop and Shop? Take that road. 3/4 of an hour. So ~~now~~ now when my son~~s~~ and daughter-in-law come, we go to Worcester and pick them up, us old-timers can do it, but going to Logan Airport, oh my god,

Q: DID YOU GO TO HIGH SCHOOL IN GARDNER?

Anne A: Yeah, a-d then I went to college for two years in Providence, ~~then~~ business, then I had to come back, I had a job out there, I was the only ~~one~~ lone in the family, my mother was crying, so I came back. And of course in Rhode Isl~~and~~ and there was more work, and I couldn't get a job at first, and they were tkaing inventory at Heywood-Wakefield.

Anne A: My neighbor, she was working there, and she put my name in and that's how I got in, big deal, \$12 a week, and I had to pay my mother \$7 a week, so I didn't have much money, \$5, but we managed anyway. The boss and his wife, they were terrible people. We had to stay there, there was no other place to go.

Q: AND WHAT DID YOU DO EXACTLY?

Anne A: Well, I did billing and then at night until nine o'clock we made these great big forms for Macy's, Irish Macy's, because the trucks would come in, and you had to work for twelve hours.

Patrick A: See, Macy's demanded the billing, everything to go along with the truck driver, so when the truck came in so when the truck backed up in New York City, the driver would have to have everything all right there, so that the receiver would see which department to send it to. They demanded it, and to keep the business, they had to do it.

Q: SO YOU WOULD START AT?

Anne A: Eight in the morning until nine at night.

Q: WAS THAT USUAL THAT YOU WOULD WORK UNTIL NINE AT NIGHT?

Anne A: No, the others didn't. Our department did, because we had a stinky boss and his wife and they were there and . . . Was Flossie there then? No, Anne Freeman was, she was originally from Reading, she came from Wakefield too, and we had to work, we were crazy, nowadays, tell them to go to you know where.

Q: WHEN WAS THIS?

Anne A: That was 1932, 33.

Q: SO IT WAS THE DEPRESSION YEARS?

Anne A: It was the Depression.

Q: BUT THEY WERE STILL HIRING PEOPLE?

Anne A: Well, that was why you were so lucky to get a job, 'cuz you couldn't get a job anywhere, of course you would have been better off,

I think, going ~~it~~ into the factory, make more money, course they weren't making that much money, you were making \$14, was it?

Patrick A: I was making uh --50 hours-- 38 cents per hour, \$19.00 per week. I was making \$19, she was making \$12, we got married.

Q: You were in the SHIPPING DEPARTMENT?

P. A: Shipping office, yup.

Q: DID THE FACTORY HELP MAKE MORE THEN THE OFFICE HELP?

A. A: Oh yes, they always did.

P. A: They had to work harder, that's for sure.

Q: DID PEOPLE HAVE A PREFERENCE, WOULD THEY RATHER WORK IN THE OFFICE OR THE FACTORY?

Anne A: Oh yes, if you want to work in the factory, you work in the factory, if you want to work in the office, you work in the office.

Q: WHICH ONE? <sup>Anne</sup> Well, there's more available work in the factory than there would be in the office.

Q: BUT SOMEBODY TOLD ME THAT THE PEOPLE IN THE OFFICE WERE SEEN AS BETTER SOMEHOW OR HIGHER?

A. A: Oh they think they're better.

P. A: Like Anne, she didn't know how to type right, that was why she was qualified for the billing. I'd been typing for 47 years.

Q: OH, SO YOU WERE A SKILLED PERSON.

P. A: Oh year, in that line of work

Q: Could you leave from one COULD YOU HAVE CHANGED FROM ONE DEPARTMENT TO ANOTHER?

A. A: Well, there was not too much choices.

P. A: Well, every now and then, a girl would leave, like a secretary II, like the cost department or the traffic department or the purchasing, ~~type~~ they'd leave, then they'd put it on the bulletin board, put your name down if you want to have that job.

Anne A: They just had you, that was all there was to it. There was no competition. It's a different story now. Secretaries, they get good pay. Now, you don't even have to know hsorthand. When I worked there, there was about 700 people working there.

Patrick A: During the war years, they grew up over 12, 13 1400. The war years started in '42 through ~~1945~~ '45.

A: Then the strike came.

A: Then they were really hiring.

Q: WAS THERE ANY LABOR AGITATION THERE WHEN YOU STARTED THERE IN THE '30s?

Patrick A: Not until the years afterwards, when a few people in there got together, they told the company that they wanted higher wages or they were going to strike, and that went on for quite a while, finally, they went on strike, and they were out for about 14 weeks. That's where they lost all the business, all the nice customers. When customers from all over the country couldn't get the furniture, they went to somebody else, it was somebody else, they liked the price and they stayed with it, that's when Heywood started to really go down

Q: THAT WAS AFTER THE WAR?

Patrick A: That was after the war, yup, when was that, 56, 58? I'm not too sure about that ~~was~~ one.

Anne A: Another thing about Heywood-Wakefield, they would sell furniture to certain stores, not anybody could buy their furniture, they made a big mistake there, remember?

Q: I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

Patrick A: Well, you take like uh there's a company out in Columbus, OKio,

A:       ? and there's another one, Lazarus, they only allowed two or three outlets in Columbus, Ohio, Other people tried to get Hey-Wakefield furniture, and the salesman said, "I can't. I'd like to but I can't, company policy is just those three stores in ohio, in Columbus.

Q: OH, THEY WERE MAKING IT EXCLUSIVE?

A: Yeah, through Cincinnati, all through that area and down through Kentucky . . .

Q: WAS IT CONSIDERED RICH PEOPLE'S FURNITURE?

A: Well, Heywood had a very good reputation . . . End of side 1  
Side 2

ANN: Well, what about that one in Westminster, and he wanted to buy Heywood's furniture?

Q: THEY DIDN'T WANT THAT COMPANY TO CUT THE PRICES AND SELL THE FURNITURE FOR LESS MONEY?

P: Yeah.

Q: WHY, BECAUSE THEN THEY'D WANT TO BUY IT FOR LESS MONEY?

P: The big companies want to have just their sole project right there.

A: Preferred customers, get it?

Q: FOR ALL THEIR LINES, OR JUST 0 FOR SOME OF THEIR LINES?

A: ALL THEIR LINES. Then from then on, after the strike, it just kept going down. And there was an awful lot of noise (?).

My cousin, Peter, worked in the wood shop, and of course, being from the old school, conservative and all that, and the stuff that they threw away he said was a crime. It was a crime. They'd make a patent--if it was right or not, if it fit or not, they'd make maybe a couple a hundred, didn't fit, cut 'em all up, throw it away.

P: \_You see, this was Heywood's. If they made a door, & everything was perfect, but inside, there'd be a slit and all that, well, they'd

take not only that, but the whole cutting and just throw them in the hog. The hog was what was rounded up and went into the powerhouse to burn, like sawdust.

Q: OH, THEY WOULD TAKE THE WHOLE TABLE AND PUT IT IN? . . . OH, YOU MEAN THE WHOLE DOOR OF THE TABLE.

A: Supposing that they made this wrong . . .

Q: OK, WHAT WOULD YOU CALL THAT, THE SPINDLE?

A: YEAH, SPINDle. Say that they're making maybe two hundred, people would say, weél, why do you make two hundred, why don't you make a few of them, cuz it takes so much time to set up a machine. They don't pay no attention.

p; And the foreman at the woodshop, to cover themselves up, they'd tell the guys to get rid of it.

Q: SO NOBODY COULD SEE THAT THEY MADE SUCH A BIG MISTAKE

P: Defniitely. That's only part of it

A: And, they had their favorites, the bosses had their favorites. There was a lot of favoritism.

Q: YES, I'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE, CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU MEAN BY FAVORITISM OR HOW THEY'D EXPRESS THAT?

P: Well, this is an example, this may or may not be true, but I've heard it many times. A few guys at the woodshop ? . . . and he said, "Well, if you want this job, you have to set me up a few nights a week across the street in Carbone's barroon." So that's why the guys had to do to keep their jobs.

Q: OH, SO THEY HAD TO PAY FOR THE FORMMAN'S DRINKS?

P: Yeah.

A: How boug Mr. Bernard? My father worked for Mr. Bernard, he was the super of the shipping department.

P: Well, they kicked out my boss first, Jim Cleary from Wakefield

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to bring in Mr. Bernard, who was a good friend of President Greenwood, the owner of the factory.

Q: WHEN THEY KICKED OUT JIM CLEARY, WHERE DID HE GO? FIRED HIM?

P: Back to Wakefield, out of a job.

P: So finally, they had to have another boss in there during the war, to take ~~that~~ charge of the shell casings and cargo bodies and all that, they brought him back, as supervisor of another department or otherwise he would still be out of a job.

Q: AND WHAT ABOUT HIS REPLACEMENT, DID HE KNOW WHAT HE WAS DOING?

P: The only thing he knew was horses. Because I worked for him, and

(A: He came down to Candle Light, that was our place.)

he came down to Candle Light, trying to mooch off beer--~~and~~ and money too.

Q: Candle LIGHT WAS THE NAME OF YOUR FATHER'S BARROOM?

A: Yeah, still there.

A: He wanted money from my father, so that he could pay the horses. Couple a hundred.

P: I came~~up~~ home from work that day and I said to Anne, "Tell your mother, hide the money."

Q: HE CAME DOWN AND WANTED TO GET THE MONEY SO THAT YOUR FATHER COULD KEEP HIS JOB, BASICALLY?

P: YAH, AND HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE! A: Not the only one.

Q: DID YOUR FATHER GIVE IT?

A & P: NO! P: Because I tipped off Anne to tell her mother.

A: But he never fired him, either. But he did that to Paul Johnson, ? FOR four, five, six hundred dollars.

Q: OTHERWISE HE'D HAVE THEM FIRED?

A:///P; They would be on the in with him. They'd be on the shit list.

A: Remember, he'd have the guys from the shipping department, he had a home ~~up~~ up the line, they'd go up there, paint his house, Saturday morning.

P: Six or seven workers from the shipping department would go up and take care of all his painting and cleaning and picking up<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> and all.

Q: DID GREENWOOD HAVE ANY IDEA THIS WAS GOING ON?

P: Not on that, no.

Q: And, of course, the workers, who are they going to tell, right.

A: To keep their job, had to shut up.

Q: DIDN'T HE HAVE AN IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR TOO?

P: Well, all the superintendents were ? with him.

Q: WHAT'S THE ~~FIE~~ DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUPERINTENDENT AND A FOREMAN?

P: Well, like in the woodshop, there was a superintendent, Frank Parish, he;s still living but in bad shape. There'd be maybe some eight or nine different foremen, ten foremen, you know, had to go up and tell the superintendent this and that. One of them would be in charge of ten or eleven people.

Q: OH, SO THE SUPERINTENDENT WAS OVER THE FOREMAN?

P: Oh yeah, he was top boy, yah.

q; and OVER THE SUPERINTENDENT WAS

P: Greenwood.

Q: OH, THAT'S IT.

A: That's it.

Q: AND NOBODY WOULD GO TO GREENWOOD AND SAY, LOOK, THIS IS WHAT'S GOING ON

P: Well, somebody went to Greenwood on his best buddy. Brandon (Bernard?).

Q: SOMEBODY DID TELL ON HIM?

P: Sure~~M~~ Minos, I worked with him and he's kind of deaf for teeth(?). And Minos came crying to me one day, telling me the whole story about the money business, that was when I found out see. And I said, well, do you want me to go up to Greenwood with you? I said, I'll go up with you. No, he said, I 'll go alone. So he went up there, he spewed everuthing out, ~~and~~ to Mr. Greenwood, and that's when he took action and eliminated his friend.

Q: SO MR. GREENWOOD TRIED TO GO BY THE BOOK?

P: Yes, he was honest about it. (A: He was honest.) Very nice man.

A: He was a wonderful, wonderful p~~r~~esident, wonderful.

You couldn't ask for a nicer guy.

Q: CUZ HE WAS STRICT TOO, I GOT THE IMPRESSION.

A: Oh yeah. But you can't keep track of all those guys.

P: You see, Dick Greenwood \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_ with the Heywood family, from way back. He married a Heywood, didn't he?

Q: HE'S RELATED SOMEHOW.

P: YEAH, He is. He married his first wife, divorced her, and married this girl from Nova Scotia, Canada, someplace? (A: It's been so long.) Prince Edward's Island?

A: But he really was good. Do you know where the Legion Hall is? The American Legion? That used to be his home. It was a big, big place. I went to School Street (?) and I went to school with Barbara Heywood . . . and they lived on Reservoir Hill., way, way way on top. On the other side of the tracks, all rich kids were in our class.

P: And all her girlfriends, they wanted to know how she could play around with the uptowners, and the reason was that she was a star basketball player, most of the girls uptown were on the basketball team, they were good too.

A: Barbara Heywood, they used to bring her to school with a chauffeur, in the summertime, you know, little wagon and pony, can you imagine how our eyes ~~w~~ used to pop right out!

Q: BUT SHE STILL WENT TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL?

A: She did! Yeah, in the eighth grade, she had one dress that she wore a week, one dress, and you never saw that dress again.

Q: SHE'D WEAR IT THE WHOLE WEEK?

A: WHOLE week! And that was it. We remember that. We'd wonder, what

happened to the dress? She was a nice-looking girl, she was nice, too.

Q: DID ALL THE OWNERS' CHILDREN GO ~~THE~~ TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

A: I think so. After high school, I think she's in Connecticut someplace. Do you ~~KNOW~~ know where Lawrence Street is?

Well, all the nice homes up there, that's where Dr. Reading lives, Daboose (?), course, they're either dying or retiring. Those guys, they lived in these beautiful homes and they were making forty dollars a week, and we thought, whoa, if we ever make forty dollars a week! 'Member? We'd be rich!

P: 1932, I was making a thousand dollars a year. Amazing. Nowadays, the kids refuse to work for five dollars an hour. (A: Kids don't want to work anymore.) Times have changed. (A: You can't live on five dollars an hour now.) It costs a lot of money. You know when our folks came to America, they had to get away from Lithuania, they had to go through marshes and fields and all that.

P: Uncle George, he skipped out of there because he didn't want to serve in the Russian army.

A: Russian army.

P: What did they have to serve, two, four years, something like that?

A: Couple of years anyway, so he came out here and he landed in Pennsylvania. Most everybody at Gardner at one time or other worked at Heywood-Wakefield.

Q: WHY IS THAT? JUST CUZ IT'S THERE?

A: Well, there's no factories, well, there was Derby's, they went kaput; Simplex, that's new, there weren't too many factories, Nichols and Stone, now, and I think <sup>~.</sup> [Carter Key], that's going to get out.

I was surprised about ? , never thought that would happen. Gardner, I like Gardner, but it's going to be a bedroom town, that's all, there's going to be no factories here at all, too bad, we had chances, we had chances to get GE.

Q: DO YOU THINK SOMETHING COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE CLOSING OF  
HEYWOOD-WAKEFIELD? WHY DID IT CLOSE?

P: Well, I might be wrong in this, but, these big shots used to come from all over the country, Heywood big shots, get into town, for furniture sales convention, and teh'y'd spend galore, down at the Colonial Hotel. Well, it got so they were borrowing money, and they couldn't pay back the interest, finally this Mr. Watkins§ Sr., come here, / he says, I'll loan you money, but I want first crack if you go out of business, you see, at that time the Jewish people wanted to buy out Heywood's, so that's why Mr. Watkins came in, very nice guy too, and he said, I'll loan you the money, but on the condition that if you sell, I want first chance on buying it.

Q: WHY DID HE WANT IT?

A: He used to work there.

P: To keep the Jewish people out. You know, the Jewish big shots. Cuz once they get hold of a company , they'll strip it for everything they can and then file for bankruptcy. Oh, they're pretty clever.

Q: WOULD THESE BE LOCAL PEOPLE OR PEOPLE FROM THE OUTSIDE?

A & P: Outside.

A: Cuz we haven't got any well-to-do people around here, I mean, money, doctors and lawyers and stuff like that, but nobody/§ that's . . .

Q: BIG MONEY.

A: There's no big money in Gardner.

Q: BUT THERE USED TO BE A JEWISH COMMUNITY.

A: Not too many Jewish people, they don't have their own rabbi now.

P: These people like from New York City, or Boston, they saw a good chance to come in and strip all the assets and leave it there.

P: Just like this company that came in from Canada, the ? mall, they're going to strip it.

A: OH, yeah. Now, you know, at Heywood, they used to have second-hand

furniture, and ~~...~~ was there, and if I tried to get a good buy, I couldn't get a good buy, but I know, I'm not mentioning names, but, he'd practically give them for nothing ~~if~~-- his friends-- and I don't think that's right

Q: THE GUY WHO WOULD RUN THE STORE?

A: That'd run the store. There were a few things I wanted and he wanted too much money and I'd hear that somebody else had gotten them for half-price. So, I mean that was not right. It was favoritism and they didn't have the right bosses there either. If you sucked around the big shot, you got the job, whether they knew the job or whether they didn't know the job. There was some good guys, I admit.

Q: DID WOMEN HAVE ANY OPPORTUNITIES TO BE BOSSES?

A: NO. They never had a chance.

Q: JUST WOULDN'T HAPPEN?

A: OH, no. ~~It was unheard of.~~ It was unheard of.

P: You see, the men were up here and the women were down here. They didn't give them credit for anything. Never.

A: They never paid the women any money either. I was lowest-paid.

Q: YOU MEAN THEY WERE PAID LOWER THAN THE MEN?

A: Oh, absolutely. The women did all the dirty work. Now this woman, Alexander Arisomovich, she was Lithuanian, part Lithuanian and Polish, she was blind. Now she worked during the war. What, she was sanding at first?

P: Sanding at first, then they found out that her fingers were very nimble, very keen mind, but she couldn't see, so they gave her a desk with all these different screws and bolts and nuts and ? and some of each one had to go into a little package. You see, Heywood made a lot of bunk beds during the war and so many screws, bolts had to go tacked onto that and it was her job to pick them up and put them in a package.

Amazing. That she could do it. Many times I'd go by and she'd say, Hi, Packy!, she knew by the voice.

Q: OR BY YOUR STEP PROBABLY.

P: I used to talk to her and I'd watch her.

A: Everybody would help her. She died at the Patch a little while ago. And she could play the piano, clean her house, she always had her own home.

Q: DID SHE MARRY?

A: She finally got a guy, he was very good to her. She had different guys living, I don't know, none of our business, but glad that she always had somebody, she tangled up with this Polish guy and the family was against them. He was wonderful to her.

P: Cuz he worked at Heywood also.

A: That's how he met her, at Heywood's. She used to be quite a talker. But she worked at Heywood's a long time.

Q: WOULD THEY HIRE HANDICAPPED PEOPLE AS A RULE?

A & P: They did.

A: During the war, they did.

P: But their job capacity wasn't too great.

A: But they never paid them that much money, either.

Q: WOULD THERE BE WOMEN'S JOBS AND MEN'S JOBS?

A: What do you mean? There were lots of women working there.

Q: Yeah, but WERE THERE CERTAIN JOBS THAT ONLY WOMEN WOULD DO AND CERTAIN JOBS THAT ONLY MEN WOULD DO?

P: Well, the weight limit, what a woman could lift, that's a law across the whole country. If, say, 35, 40 pounds, a woman couldn't do that.

A man would have to come over and put it in front of her and then she'd do the work on it, whatever it was and then the same guy would take it away. That was the only discrimination I could see there.

Q: WOULD THEY GET THE SAME PAY AS THE MEN? FOR THE SAME JOB?

A: Well, I imagine a man would always get more money, wouldn't he?

P: Well, up till the strike came and the union came in uh (A: Oh, that;s right too, the union) the men were getting ~~more~~ more. They called 'em floor men(? Side 2, counter 963-974)

A: They made beautiful furniture. It's too bad it went. But then the boys took over and they didn't know, know how.

Q: BY BOYS YOU MEAN ?

A: THE Hedley boys, George and . . .

Q: BUT COULDN'T THEY GET SOMEBODY ELSE TO TAKE OVER OR THEY THOUGHT THEY KNEW?

P: Well, they wanted everything to go down the line, all their chillun's chillun's chillun would take over and . . .

A: And of course, not everybody's made to run a factory. You've got to have somebody who's got something up here to run the factory.

Q: I MEAN, THEY SEEMED TO BE EMOTIONALLY COMMITTED TO RUNNING IT.

P: I mean, there was one Heywood boy, he spent one month in the shipping department, and then he got promoted to the main office, big job up there.

A: See, that's what happens.

P: You see, they wanted to have that particular son learn all about the packing and shipping and then go to another department and then up to the office so that he'd have a general knowledge of what the whole company was about, which I think was a good idea.

A: But they just didn't have the know-how.

Q: DID THAT GIVE A CERTAIN FEELING TO THE PLACE, THAT IT WAS A FAMILY BUSINESS?

A: I don't think so, I don't think that it ever entered our mind.

P: This certain guy I'm talking about, this certain Heywood boy, when he came in, everybody, oh, look at the big shot, , but the Heywood boy said, I'm doing the same thing as you, I want to learn. After about a week, he fit in just liek that, good, very good.

Q: EVERYBODY KNEW THE HEYWOODS, WOULDN'T IT BE A FIRST NAME BASIS, GEORGE,

John?



A: Well, they always called George and John by first name, don't they?

P: Well, years ago, there was a guy named Seth, he was one of the old-timers, and then there was George and John and of course Seth Heywood, Jr., he would have no part of Heywood-Wakefield at all, so he went to Boston and got a job as a stock broker? He just didn't like the furniture business. And he told his father, I'm never coming in here.

A: Well, I don't think his father liked the business too well, either.

P: Seth? No, I don't think so either. But it was passed down, and he had to do it.

Q: CUZ WHEN GEORGE HEYWOOD CAME TO THE REUNION, HE WAS TLAKING TO EVERYONE AND EVERYONE WAS YOU KNOW HI GEORGE, HOW ARE YOU?

A: Oh yah

Q: AND HE LIVES IN TOWN, WHICH SEEMS DIFFERENT TO ME WHEN WHEN YOU KNOW THE PRES. WILL LIVE SOMEWHERE ELSE IN SOME ELITE PLACE.

P: When Mr. Greenwood retired as president . . .

Q: HE LIVED IN TOWN TOO, DIDN'T HE?

A: Oh yeah.

P: John says, why don't you try it George, be president? And he tried for a couple of years, and he didn't like it either, so he stepped down and John became president. I always got along with George good.

A: Oh yeah. But it's a comedown for them too, you know what I mean? The Hunts bought that beautiful home, that John owned on Pearl Street. I don't know where he's living now, no idea.

P: He's on the Cape. Cuz he set one of his sons up on the cranberry business.

A: What hurt everybody, the profit-sharing.

Q: THE?? IT HURT EVERYBODY?

A: Well, profit-sharing, the office . . .

p; Just the office help. A: Packy lost, what, around \$35,000?

P: Around \$35,000.

Q: HOW DID THAT WORK?

A: We don't know where the money went.

PL: During the war, instead of paying income tax, the government told all these companies, whatever you m~~f~~, take one-third of the profit you make, and put it into profit-sharing, so they went around all the office people, getting names and all that and each year we used to get a statement, about how all that profit-sharing was growing and growing and growing . . .

Q: IN OTHER WORDS, Y~~I~~OU WOULD OWN STOCK IN THE COMPANY?

P: It's what's called profit-sharing. When you retired, you'd get that, lump sum. But when the company started losing money, they started dipping into it and dipping ~~in~~ in and pretty soon, there's practically nothing.

A: They said it was bad investments. Because, Minos, he worked with Packy, what did --he got \$45,000.

P: Cuz he retired before they started dipping.

P: ~~Boy~~ did he cry when he left there, course he was close to seventy, . . . that was the guy who was deaf.

Q: IS HE STILL LIVING?

P: No, he died a few years ago. But he was smart. But instead of getting \$45,000, I only got \$15,000.

Q: BUT YOU SHOULD HAVE GOTTEN THE OTHER.

P: Should of. But they said there was no money.

A: Now, I'm not going to mention his name, but he almost went crazy. I don't know why, because they have no children.

Q: Oh because he put his money in and he didn't get it?

A: No, I mean profit sharing, you know, he was supposed to get a lot more because he was way up, he was the accountant or something like that.

P: See the way profit sharing runs now a days if a company puts in a dollar and you put a dollar in or ten dollars in, ten dollars in, the company wouldn't be able to do that. It's all Heywood-Wakefield money so they could do, could do what they pleased with it.

Q: But in a way for them it was a low interest loan because they got to use your money in the meantime only they paid you back with interest. So for them it was a good deal, they got money to use.

P: And they were using that money year after year, year after year. And when they started dipping too much, it hurts.

A: And I guess what you haven't got, you don't miss. I mean, you didn't put nothing in. But there's a lot of people who felt, well you know.

P: Well I still have four more years to go on my profit sharing. See you take out \$100 a month, that's \$1,200 a year, and the only income tax you pay is what you take out. And all the interest on the monies is still in the bank, that's not taxable at all until you take it out.

A: Remember Johnny Chase, didn't he lose a lot money because of Heywood Wakefield?

P: Well he went into, what's that word, not the stock market, capital gains business and the company he was in, in that capital gains, they, he lost almost all of it.

Q: You had to gamble when you go into these things.

A: They wanted Packy to go in and Packy says no way. But you told Johnny Chase not to.

P: I told him, no don't do it, don't do it Johnny. But Joe Bogdanski, you know Joe Bogdanski, he's the one that got me interested in the stock market so I asked Joe one day, what's this capital gains business? Stay away from it, he says, stay away from it, stay away from it.

A: (laughs) That Joe Bogdanski's quite a guy.

Q: Yeah.

P: He gave me, he gave me some very good hints.

Q: He's very proud of his stock market ability.

P: Oh yes, yes he is.

A: He can talk too.

P: We're very proud of Joe on that pension plan too.

A: Yeah, he's the one that worked hard for it.

Q: Because that sounds like a similar deal from the profit sharing from what you're saying. The people expected their pensions and suddenly...

P: Some of them didn't get it.

A: It's a good thing the government started that.

P: He wrote to this, this girl come from Fitchburg and I guess it's the PCB in Washington, DC, Joe got after them. And they sent a representative out and they wanted to know

what the story was so Joe told them. You know pretty soon we started getting our pension.

A: Otherwise nobody would have got it if it wasn't for Joe Bogdanski.

P: You see, you see there was four pension plans. One for the top executives, one for the office help, like me, one for union members and one for non-union members. Joe said, I don't care about you Packy, oh yes I do, I don't care about the executives. These other three, he says, I'm going to fight, fight, fight.

Q: Do you think the company's intention was simply to...

P: Well they figured they were going bankrupt, they couldn't pay for it. So when they filed this bankruptcy business the United States government takes over all these pension plans now. I guess they're called the PCB.

Q: Oh so it's actually the government that pays the pension.

A: Yeah.

P: They pay my pension now. But when I pass away, she don't get that pension.

A: No. I say get all you can because after he lost the other profit sharing I said get all you can.

P: We had a choice of taking half of it, half for me and half for her until I passed away, then she would continue getting the other half but that's fifteen years ago so we made all right.

A: The best thing is to take out as much as you can because you never know what's going from one day to the other what's going to happen. So I mean...

P: I make \$160.00 a month which isn't too much now a days but it helps, it helps.

Q: Did that change people's feelings about the company, I mean, as it started to close it seems to me that there was certain loyalty to the company, wasn't there?

P: A little bitterness too, a little bitterness.

A: Yeah. What could you do though.

P: You say you should have done this way, you should have done that way, but should have is too late.

A: Well you figure how many, some people that worked 35 years and still, where are you going to get a job. You know, it's, how about Conant Ball. Of course there weren't that many people. And when Collier Keyworth is going to go it's going to be another...

Q: Do you think there will be any furniture companies left in Gardner after a while?

A: I, well, the only one that I really think is going to keep on going is Nichols & Stone. That chair you're sitting on.

Q: It's comfortable.

A: Do you know my aunt, my aunt bought this, oh I don't know she, a long time ago. I was on Grant Street, my God, that was, that thing, she bought that baby about 50 years ago and she said, that was a second, she said, that's why

I'm giving it to you, it's only \$10.00. \$10.00 then was a lot of money. I've had it since then. We wouldn't part with that. Now the chairs they made at Heywood Wakefield, the rocking chairs, they were terrible. I gave my son one and I told him, through it out. The seats are so narrow, it's not comfortable. And even, now the chairs I got from my, the table came from Heywood's but the chairs I wouldn't buy it because the seats aren't comfortable. They're made short, you know, so I bought that at Bent Brothers.

Tape 2 Side A

Q: Now the project bought it so it really belongs to the project. I don't know what they do with these afterwards but... One of the things I wanted to ask you when you were talking before about women's work. The women I talked to so far also said that women wouldn't be bosses and that there were certain, you know, you couldn't get too far as a women but they didn't seem to, it didn't seem to disturb them. There wasn't this feeling that women were suppose to be able to be bosses.

A: Well of course we feel that was because we didn't know any better. We figured that's the way it's got to be. We never thought about being bosses. Now we worked in the office, every man was a boss. Never worked for a husband and wife.

Q: Oh that's, now tell me about your particular situation, I mean without getting into anything...

A: I had, I, when I first worked for, oh he's dead anyway, Roland and Bertha.

P: She's still living.

A: She's still living but he's dead.

Q: Well anyway, just to tell you I would never tell anyone else that you would say this here.

A: I don't care, they know how I feel. And they were slave drivers. They were all company, all company. They didn't cared about the person. I mean, he could have stood up for



us and said, wait a minute, if you think my girls are going to work until 9:00, something's gotta be done, or you had the day off or something like that. We'd go to the bathroom and he would check the time we were in the bathroom. That's the way, then finally we moved to another building and they were married.

Q: Oh she worked in the office?

A: She worked the two together and they were going. And every time they had an argument or a fight, they took it out on us. Well then when we moved to this other building, what number's that do you know, well anyway, they were married. And everything's got to be like drill sergeant, you know, everything's got to be done...

P: They made a little office space on Central Street.

A: Yeah on Central Street.

P: That's when they were remodeling the main, the big main office.

A: The general and his wife.

P: Well didn't she throw something at you one time?

A: She threw the big book at me, big one, one of these big books at me. I don't know if she was having a fight with him or something like that so I said, I had it up to here. Of course I was married and I had it up to here.

P: You went to see Greenwood didn't you?

A: Yeah, I took the book and I threw it at her. I said, if you can throw the book at me, I can throw it at you, I don't care. And he says, her husband Roland said, you're going to

be out of a job. I said, I don't care if I'm going to be out of a job. I said, there's other places I can go. So he was needling me, so I got up and Koslowski and I, I said, I'm going to see Mr. Greenwood. And this other, this Rita Conner, she was supposed to stick with us, you know, and she was always griping about them too. Well anyway I went to see Mr. Greenwood. He was very nice. Well I was crying (she laughs) and all that like a damn fool.

Q: So his door was open to have people come in like that.

A: Yeah, sure. I walked in crying and I told him. Then Flossy...

P: He wanted to know what was going on.

A: Yeah. Flossy went in there and she told him. And Bertha wouldn't go, she was sticking up by Roland and Bertha.

P: You mean Rita Conner.

A: Rita Conner, she wouldn't go. So I didn't say nothing to her, if she's in love with them. So they separated us, they separated, Flossy and I went to work upstairs for Roland and Chippy, I mean for Stanley Glinski. We had no trouble, nobody, we got our work out. There was no mistakes, we did fine and then they put him where, in the credit department?

P: Yeah.

A: You tell her that part.

P: That was the credit union.

A: Credit union, yeah.

P: See I was on the board of directors with a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and I was number five on there in charge of the loans. People would come in looking for a loan and all that, and I was in charge of that. Well anyway, they got so that people were going up there, Bertha wouldn't give them a loan.

Q: Oh she didn't like that.

P: Because she didn't think they were qualified or good enough. Well of course I worked in the shipping office out in the factory and they, they used to come in to see me. Pretty soon I got three or four complaints each and every week. So I went to see Bill Fowley, he was the president, came up from Heywood Wakefield also. Bill Fowley and I saw Arnold Henry, he was the vice president, Trustin Narrage and what was it, well anyway. So I told them about it, and they said Packy you're crazy. I said, I'm not crazy. I said, here's the list, there are about 20 people. I copied the names, they said, give me the names, where they worked and this and that. Arnold said, Bill Fowley said well we're going to have a special meeting. What was it, 1:00, 2:00 in the afternoon. Well Bill Fowley said, what do you think Packy? I said, I think it's a damn shame. People come in here for two or three hundred dollar loan or five hundred dollar loan which was big in those days, to carry them over to buy something. So we all marched into Greenwood's office and spelled the whole thing out to Greenwood. So Greenwood said, I'll take care of that. Because Greenwood and the

company were paying for our office space, our electricity, our heat, you know, and all our paperwork, and all that. They were paying for everything to get the credit union established.

Q: Were they paying your salary?

P: Yeah, oh yeah. See, of course we were all working in different...

A: No you didn't get no money for being...

P: No money for being there, just the money for working at Heywood's.

Q: Oh, oh.

P: See we were chosen to get this credit union.

Q: Was that on your own time?

P: No, during, during the Heywood Wakefield time. I'd go up there and I'd come back and work like hell to catch up. But regardless, Mr. Greenwood said, I'll take care of that. What did he do, fire both of them?

A: Fired the both of them.

P: Fired the both of them. He said, I'm not going to stand for that nonsense.

A: So she, she went to work, she had a job here, I used to buy my meat down to Gardner Beef and she was upstairs in the office. I guess she got canned out of there, she's bossy. She got a job down at Simplex and she called me up one day and she said, Ann I work in the export, would you like to work for me? I said, what? I wouldn't work for you if I was starving.

Q: Did you say that?

A: Sure, I mean, my God, work for that woman? She put me, what she put me through.

Q: That's amazing that she had the nerve to call you and ask you.

A: Yeah. And then when we, remember we would see her, oh we were big pals, you know. Well when we'd see her, I was polite you know. But I wouldn't work for her. She called me twice to go to work for her. Nobody can work for her, they'd quit.

P: Before I forget, in the credit union, this Rose Cosier, she's polish, she was doing all the paperwork and all that stuff, they raised her up in charge so a woman finally got a break.

A: Oh yeah, she did.

P: They put her in charge of the credit union. She had this Hackett woman, Hackett girl to take her place.

A: Oh, Germaine.

P: Yeah, Germaine.

Q: Do you know more or less when that was? More or less what year that was? Just a ball park?

P: Big ball park though.

Q: The 50's?

P: You were down at Thayer's then, weren't you? It was in the 50's wasn't it?

A: About the 50's. About 55 or 56 I think. Around the middle 50's I think that's when it was. She had that job for a long time didn't she?

P: And all these people I had the list of to give Mr. Greenwood. All those people came over after and they thanked me. They said, we didn't know who to go to so I'm never high on the totem pole so they come to see me.

A: You know it's nice to be strick but I mean, it's all right to be a company man but you can go overboard too.

Q: What do you mean, a company man?

A: Well they drive you like a slave so the company can make more money. They have no concern for the person themself. You can do just so much work you know.

P: They call it brown nosing.

A: And you know if somebody is on your tail all the time, you make mistakes, you're boiling inside, you feel like poking them one. I mean that's not a good way to work for anybody. I don't think so. So finally I quit.

Q: After, was it nine years?

A: I was there nine years. I worked before, when we got married and then I got pregnant, I got out then I went back again.

Q: Oh yeah, tell me, after you got married you worked there still?

A: I worked there. Then when I got pregnant...

P: She worked right up until the last day.

A: Yeah. We had no money, I had to live with my mother and my father, we didn't have no money. So I had to go back to buy some furniture (she laughs).

P: We lived down there two years, didn't we?

A: Two years.

Q: Did married women often work there or, because I remember one woman said in the early days one of the companies wouldn't hire you if you were married.

A: No, oh, they were mostly married women.

P: I don't know about Heywood, was Heywood's the same way?

A: Heywood's hired married women, there was Flossy, myself and Rita Conners and...

P: Yeah, I mean, she's talking about if a woman's married going to apply for a job.

A: Oh sure they'd hire you. They're only too glad to get you. I mean, there's no discrimination at all.

Q: And the husband's didn't have any problems with the woman working?

P: Not that I know of.

A: No because see now, Bertha and Roland, they worked together which is a bad, bad thing. I mean now I can see two of them because they would get mad, or they would have a fight or something and they would take it out on the help. So I mean I don't believe in the husband and wife working together day in and day out because that's bad.

Q: Well they can work in the same company.

A: Same company, yes. Well they were side by side.

P: They were in the same little office.

A: One is facing each other all day long.

Q: And then after you had your baby, your first baby, did you go back to work?

A: Yeah.

Q: How old was your baby?

A: Seven months.

Q: And who take care of it?

A: My mother. Then we had different people take care of the baby.

Q: What would most women do with their children when they worked?

A: What?

Q: What did the other ladies do with their children?

A: Same thing.

Q: Their mother or...

A: Their mother's or have somebody. Because when I, when my mother was working there was Mrs. Penski living upstairs and she took care of me when I was going to school and she, I mean we were brought up. When I went to school I didn't know a word of english. Peter and Brownie, my cousins, we were like brothers and sisters, we'd go as far as the Polish Church and we didn't see no kids on Pleasant Street. You know, we'd run home and go underneath the bed because we thought the truant officer was going to come. We didn't, in our first grade I think maybe two kids passed and we didn't know the difference that we stayed back because we didn't know how to talk english. Now we didn't, we had a large class, we maybe had about 40 kids and there was nobody helping the teacher. We were playing with pegs and little things, but we learned. Teachers were strick. And I'm



telling you, you sat at your chair and no talking back or nothing like that. But that was good discipline. And now, when we went to California...

P: Christ it was like a social club.

A: My God they had a sofa in the classroom, easy chairs, the kids are walking around, wandering around. I thought, my God, what is this? Schools in California are terrible.

P: They had a blackboard, the kids go up and write anything they want on there.

A: Yeah.

P: That was in San Jose.

A: San Jose. Well they had, Lisa, they had to have somebody, she went about two or three times a week to learn how to read. I'll show you an example how they write.

Q: Oh the children?

A: Well I mean, she's a college graduate. It's hard to read, isn't it?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

A: That's my daughter.

P: And Lisa, she's...

A: My grandson's wife...

P: Lisa kind of...

A: They print, print. They don't write. They don't know the time tables.

Q: Did you know any kids who spoke english in your neighborhood?

A: No, I used to learn polish. We had to learn polish because the polish would not talk but their language. So I know how to talk lithuanian, I know how to talk polish. I didn't know how to talk english.

P: You got in with the swede's pretty good too, don't you?

A: Well then I got with the swede's, then I had to learn the sweden. Well I didn't have to. I knew how to talk english but then I used to talk swedish and finish.

Q: You can speak swedish and finish?

A: I used to but I don't know how to talk polish anymore, I don't know how to talk swedish. I've been away from them. But you had to learn the language. I used to talk polish fluently but we had to. So I mean, the schools they go now...

P: When you moved to another district in Gardner there's all fin's and swede's.

A: All fin's and swede's.

P: And to get along with the kids and the folks you had to learn it.

A: Well they resented us because I had to go down to Bonk's Market and get polish bread. Mention polish bread, oh God, it's terrible, polish or lithuanian. They used to make fun out of me but then when they got to try that bread, my God they almost ate the whole loaf (she laughs).

Q: (Laughs) Yeah because I heard something about the swede's eating polish bread all the time or something like that.

P: They used to get it free, right? (laughs)

A: It's funny.

P: I never had any polish bread until I came to Gardner.

A: You got sick on polish kielbasa never mind about the bread (she laughs). I used to make kielbasa, I don't do it anymore. It's too much work, it's a lot of work.

Q: Things that are not labor intensive, it shouldn't take more than 30 minutes to prepare (all laugh).

A: Oh yeah, I mean, oh yeah, I used to work. I worked down to Thayer's.

Q: Okay, you had your first baby and you went back to Heywood and worked there?

A: I think there was some kind of an argument, what did I get mad at or something. I got mad and I quit. So I tried to collect my unemployment.

P: Oh yeah, that's right too.

A: And they wouldn't give it to me after all these years, after nine years you'd think they'd give me, they wouldn't sign me up. So I said, well I'll fix you. So I went to work during Christmas time down Sears & Roebuck.

P: That's where LaChance is now, on Parker Street.

Q: Downtown.

A: Well I was pregnant for Dennis, my second one.

P: That was six years later.

A: Yeah, six years later but I was still at Heywood's, you know. I quit and I was pregnant but I guess something happened, I don't know what happened. I worked in the credit department, you know during the Christmas rush.

Q: At Sears?

A: At Sears & Roebuck, yeah. Now that was just during Christmas. I told them, I said, just Christmas, I don't want to work anymore after that. Well Dot Darling, the undertaker from Smith's Funeral Parlor, well she was working there too. And she was pregnant. Of course she didn't know I was pregnant, and I didn't know she was pregnant. She was getting through and so the boss came up to me and said, how would you like to take her job? I told him, I said, no I'm pregnant. So I said, you know the reason I came here, I want to collect. And he said, okay and he signed me and I collected. I was as big as a house. I went up to, I was 210 pounds when I was pregnant with that first one but the second one. And I signed up and they'd call me, they'd call me and said we got a job for you. I said, oh yeah. Well I don't know what kind of excuses I made, I had excuses, I really got out of it. So I collected right to the end. And here I'm standing in line as big as a kite as if anybody would know I was pregnant.

Q: And how was it in the room at Heywood, who was, how many people in the room, what did it look like?

A: Oh my God, there were, in the main office there was quite a few, there was the Greenwood's, the purchasing department.

P: In the main office there was four floors.

A: On the first floor, we were maybe Arnold Henry and all their gang, there must have been about 50.

P: Bancroft was working there too.

A: Bancroft too.

P: He took over Haywood's place as the traffic manager.

That was another Haywood, H A Y.

A: I'd maybe say on the first floor we were about 30 people. Yeah, just about 30 people.

P: Then you had the second floor, it was the credit department and service department. Then the third floor was where Mr. Greenwood had his office originally, the third floor.

A: Yeah. He was downstairs when I was there.

P: That's right, they did move him down, right in the corner.

A: Right in the corner, right. It was a nice office. Of course they had an elevator to go to all these floors. I mean outside of that it was good. It all depends who you're working for too.

Q: Did you have your own desk?

A: Oh yeah, oh yeah. We had typewriters and desks.

Q: And in the nine years that you were there, and I'd like to ask you that same question because you were there for such a long time, did the company try to modernize that you remember?

P: What do you mean, the office or the factory?

Q: Either one.

P: Okay, they remodeled the whole office.

A: Your office, huh.

P: The main office.

A: Was I there?

P: I don't know, I don't think so.

A: No, I wasn't there.

P: And over there where Cottage Street is now the whole office was moved over there. It took them over a year to remodel the main office.

A: I wasn't there.

P: Okay, and then when we come up from Wakefield, Dick Greenwood come up from Wakefield too you know, after he graduated from Harvard, Harvard Business School. We went, my God, he says, people around here just pushing trucks. Everything is going slow. He says, I'm going to modernize this place. So he went to some place up in Illinois, some kind of a company named, first name VEE. They made conveyor systems and they modernized the whole factory on conveyor systems.

Q: Oh good, and when was this?

P: It was before the war.

A: I was working when they had the conveyor system because I had to go all over the factory. I was dodging it.

P: These two things that cross Central Street to each building, Heywood Wakefield building, and we called it the conveyor system. And they had the conveyor system all through the wood shop, hooks and trays.

Q: And this was Greenwood's idea?

P: Greenwood's idea, yeah. And then he got that all things through the paint shop, the conveyor system with all the new heating apparatus. The boys and the girls were spraying furniture and they would go through the conveyor system and be in there for so many hours until it came out. It came out dry, completely dried. And from there it would come down to the girls in the packing area. That was the second floor. And then after the girls would pack up the boys would then put it on the conveyors which you know some had trays and three hooks and trays. Then it would come down into the shipping department. And the stuff would be taken off in different sections like some for upholstery chairs, sunroom chairs. Each article had a certain section it would go in. And then when they come in the shipping office to pick up their shipping tags, orders and shipping tags, the two, what they called them checkers, one for the truck shipments and one for the carload shipments. See the carload sometimes we would put about 15 cars on that railroad siding that went into the other building on this side of Cross Street. Well the checkers would go out there and they would look at the piece and slap a shipping label on it. And that would, they put the guys in this section that took off this stuff would put the other furniture back on that was tagged or labeled and that would go around and go out on the platform with the cars. And all those cars, not all would be designated for like Hornio, New York. That's the D & H Erie System. Cedar Hill, Connecticut would

be part of New Haven which is everything going to New Haven end southern. And then the other going to Chicago I think that was outside of, I don't know if there's an Elkhart out there. Well anyway, everything that was routed D & H Erie Illinois central going west would go all the way out there. And then Mechanicville, New York was routed B & M, D & H would go that way.

A: Tell her about all the different play houses they had.

P: Huh?

A: Remember all the different show rooms they had, that's what made them a lot too.

P: Well they had one in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oregon, Seattle, Washington, Chicago.

Q: Showrooms or warehouses?

A: Showrooms.

P: We would ship carloads of furniture.

A: And that furniture was on display, didn't they?

P: Yeah. And then one in Chicago, Baltimore, Buffalo, New York, High Point, North Carolina and then pretty soon they were going to get up through Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Kansas City area. They were going to build out there then.

A: See that was quite expensive to have all those...

P: But they did remodelize it.

Q: Heywoods?

A: Oh yeah.

Q: Modernize the plants here? They did remodelize the plant here?



P: The plant here, yeah.

Q: After they brought in the conveyor, did that change the way that people worked?

P: Oh yes. They felt it was security, they were secure on their job and when the union came in, I believe in the union for seniority only. They couldn't be bumped off because they had so many years on there.

Q: Did the people resent the conveyor or were they glad it was there or?

P: No, it saved them a lot of walking. You know when you push a truck all day long it saves wear and tear on your body too.

Q: Now didn't they also have the timers come in when they brought in the conveyor?

P: On different jobs, you mean for the, what department did they call that?

A: It wasn't cost department.

P: Time study.

A: Time study, yeah.

P: Hugo Austman was in charge of that.

Q: Oh they had a time study department?

P: Oh yes.

Q: Is that who ran that?

A: Hugo Austman.

Q: Is he still around?

P: Oh yeah.

Q: What's his name, Hugo?

A: Hugo, H U G O Austman.

P: He lives up on Grant Street.

A: His wife and I paled around together.

Q: Oh okay.

P: This fellow is a very smart person.

A: Very smart. He's the one that took it very bad when he lost his pension, remember?

P: Well talking about time study, well they moved us around that shipping department so damn much. One time we went down to the opening and this George Carlson, he became the photographer, well he was suppose to inspect the carriages before they were shipped out. So time study come down then and I was watching them. He had rolled that thing back and forth, this way and that, and he would get down on his knees and check the wheel and check this and that. You know to get a lot of time in so he would get a good price. Well after he got a good price he took the carriage once or twice and shipped (all laughed). You know like you see that girl on the lawn movers, she would check it out and she pulls the handle once, it works, she says, ship it. Oh yeah, they have a lot of cute ways of, of course the guys of time study they knew, they knew because they were trained to know.

A: Well they used to start a lot, I worked in, remember Ozzie Frank?

P: Trainque.

A: Frank, he married a Henderson, well I worked with her for a while in the department when I first got started I worked in there. Oh the carriages, oh my God, they used to sell a lot of carriages.

Q: Baby carriages?

A: Yeah, baby carriages. Stenson was the boss then, huh?

P: Yeah.

A: Yeah, and that was a big, big department. He had charge of how many men?

P: Quite a few.

A: Well he had quite a few men.

P: Well that building on Pine Street, four floors, he was in charge of the whole business.

A: The whole business.

Q: And then after they brought in the conveyor, that would be let's say in the, before you worked there so let's say the 20's sometime.

P: It was after you got out of there wasn't it?

A: I remember, I don't know if I went to visit you but I remember dodging the conveyors.

P: Oh yeah. I remember old Ed Flanagan. We had the carriages stored down there. The storage house come down and Greenwood and all the big shots. They took a picture of Ed Flanagan, he was about 6 foot 7, an honest man. They took a picture of him putting the first carriage on the first tray in 1941.

A: 41?

P: 41.

Q: Oh so that's when it came in?

P: That's when they pushed the button to start it, in the shipping department. But what went through the wood shop and upstairs in the paint shop was before then. That's when you ducked the trays.

A: I used to duck the trays.

P: The hooks.

A: The hooks, you see how big the buildings are. Oh my God.

Q: Did they do other kinds of modernization things in addition to the conveyor afterwards?

P: Well I don't know.

A: I don't think so.

Q: Bring in different kinds of machines?

P: I know the women squawked in the restrooms.

Q: Oh what was that?

P: You know, the toilets, the restrooms. It was just on one floor there was only two restrooms and if women wanted to go to the bathroom they would have to knock on the door to see if any men were in there.

Q: Oh they didn't have separate ones for women and men?

P: So Greenwood fixed that. He modernized a special one for the women and the other ones for the men. So he took care of that one.

A: Greenwood was a good, as I said, he was a wonderful president.

P: It was very embarrassing to walk in there on men or vice versa, have the women walk in with men there and have the men walk in with the women there.

Q: Did you know in the late 1800's I was reading in some clipping about Heywood Wakefield there was separate entrances for men and women. You wouldn't even go in the same door and separate elevators.

A: In the 1800's?

Q: In late 1880's and early 1890's.

P: That's the time the Heywood boys would go down the docks in Boston and all these foreigners, immigrants coming in, get off the boat, they'd pitch come on, come to Gardner, we'll pay your way to Gardner. We'll give you a good job, 10, 20 cents an hour something like that. See that's the way they made their money in the old days, low wages.

Q: Did they pick any particular ethnic group?

P: No, anybody who came off the boat.

Q: So they didn't care if you were from Lithuania, Ireland, Germany?

A: No.

P: Some of the guys that took the trip down are, what do they call them, linguists, they know a lot of different languages. They talk to the guys, men and women, you want a job, Gardner? (all laugh) Where's Gardner?

Q: And you know as time went on in the 60's, let's say late 60's, early 70's, that's when computers started to become important and that's what I'm trying to find out if the company tried to adapt to whatever new things were coming out. I'm sure there were new things coming out in the 50's, also 40's, 50's, I don't know what they were.

P: This guy, his last name was Saari, S A A R I, I don't know if he's still living. He must be.

A: He's got to be.

P: Paul Saari, and he went to school, Heywood sent him to school to learn all about the computer. And he done a good job there too.

A: What year was that Packy?

Tape 2 Side B

P: All right, they got this system in and Greenwood called me up in the office and he asked my opinion.

Q: You said about \$4,000 a month.

P: Yeah. It was shipments, different shipments. And I was so scared about losing my job, I told Greenwood, oh no it's not going to work, it's not going to work. If they got the computer in there making out the bills of lading and all that, I'd lose my job. So I was, I was so against it. So he called me up one day and says come on up here on the second floor. I went up there and Saari told me how the damn thing worked. And Dick says, Packy you're not going to lose your job. I said, okay Dick I'm all for it (all laugh). What an improvement that was. All that work eliminated but I had to do other things.

Q: Did that, oh, did that mean you had to work less or you just...

P: I typed less but I had to be there doing other odds and ends. See with that, on that computer, Paul Saari, he had to know, he had to know here's a wood chair, he would have to know the gross weight and the identification number for the railroad. That was classified as 8F. Now this table here was classified as 1F. Different classification for the railroads. Now if you got something else that was knocked down to KD it would be a 19F, like bed rails and beds you knock down. He had to have all those classifications on

there to put it in the computer so when everything come down there, say a shipment of the chairs, like this sofa would be 26F classification. Everything had to be on that computer so when you punched in a number it would come up, the weight and everything.

Q: Was there computers in every department?

P: Just the shipping department bills of lading.

Q: They're the only ones who had a computer?

P: Well I imagine the wood shop, the computer was working for them with how many pieces of wood in stock, how many pieces were cut. Sometimes they kept two or three extra pieces, hundred pieces that they didn't need. So they would go to the computer and look at it and say, well we got so many pieces here.

Q: How would they do it before that?

P: By hand, guess.

Q: In a book?

P: Yeah. Count.

Q: Were the other people afraid when the computer came in?

P: I imagine they were.

A: Well yeah, see...

P: See in 1972 when I quit I was making \$120.00 a week.

That's big huh? In 1972.

Q: I don't know what their pay scale was.

P: And then finally with a little overtime I got up to \$7,500 a year which is about \$150.00. Well I thought that was pretty good, didn't you hun?



A: Oh that was big money (laughs). Live like a queen and king.

P: It's a good thing you worked, that's for sure.

A: Oh yeah, I mean you had to work, we put three boys through school.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: Three boys and they all went to college. One went to Worcester Tech., one went to Wentworth, and one went to Northeastern. So I got two in Keene, New Hampshire and working for the same company and one was in California, he went to Virginia, from Virginia he's in Maryland. He's an electrical engineer. I don't know what he's doing.

P: Electrical engineer, my second son is a mechanical engineer and the third is in business administration.

A: The youngest one, he didn't give a darn about nothing, studying nothing and he's got a terrific job. Isn't it funny. I could say it, I won't say it on there. He should have been a lawyer, gift to gab.

P: He told the company if he didn't get a raise he was quitting. He meant it too.

A: Yeah. They were going to give him a \$50.00 raise. He says that's all I can get, that's a week, he says, that's all? He says, forget it, don't give me anything. His wife called me up, she's crying. Neil's going to lose his job, and all this and that. That's the way he is, see. He's a big buff. My second one, he's timid.

Q: Did they give him the raise?

A: Oh, he's got a good job out of it. That's the way he is. He's only 6'5".

Q: Only?

A: Only 6'5".

Q: Isn't it lithuanians they're tall aren't they?

A: Tall, yeah. My oldest one is the shortest.

P: He's 6'2".

A: Dennis is 6'3".

P: 6'3".

Q: They think my little girl will be 6'2".

A: Oh my granddaughter Mary, that one there, well that's the oldest granddaughter I have that's, there's Lisa but there's Mary, she's going to be a 6 footer at least.

Q: Did any of your sons marry irish or lithuanian?

A: Oh, one is married to french, the one that's from Lowell and Joni is part irish, part fin and Bob is married to an italian and she looks more lithuanian and my son looks more italian.

P: She's a complete blonde.

A: She's a blonde, blue eyes.

P: No mix or dyes in that, that's complete blonde.

Q: I met a blonde, blue eyed italian when I lived in France. I couldn't get over it. But I guess in the north they're blonde.

A: Yeah, in the north. But the rest of her family, they're all italian looking but she doesn't. She doesn't look italian at all so they were kidding the mother, who had she

been fooling around with, you know. When she was born, blonde, blue eyes.

Q: Yeah, where did she get this kid?

A: And my son's hair was black because I remember my godmother came from Brooklyn and she didn't think I heard and she said, oh my God is he black (laughs).

Q: You know the other thing you mentioned about the corn roast makes me think back about the social club. Can you tell me something about the social club.

A: Oh that was wonderful.

P: There was a guy, his name was George Matthews. He was in complete charge of it.

Q: Is he still around?

P: No.

A: No, most of them are dead. A lot of them. Most of my girlfriends are dead.

Q: Did you keep friends with the women you made at work?

A: Well after we, no, I mean, you had your own circle of friends. Well Emmie worked at Heywood's, yeah, I'm friends with her. But a lot of my friends are gone.

P: She lives in East Templeton, we don't see her except for near the...

A: A lot of them in East Templeton used to come down at the camp sometimes but they all died.

Q: Where would you meet the people that you'd see socially? At church? The club? Where would you meet them?

P: When I retired, I retired from church too.

A: Well, like some of my folks family, you take the Miskunas family, they're all dead, every one of them. I'm still living. And my neighbors, we're friends with them, we go working with them, go out socially and they just, when I come to think about it they're practically all dead.

Q: But they would be neighbors more than people at work.

A: Well, you don't have neighbors anymore. We don't have neighbors. I mean, everybody is for themselves now. Now they're nice people but we have nothing socially to do with them. Across the street, well she just lost her husband but I mean, socially no. She comes up a lot, we talk but we don't go out nights. We don't go parties anymore.

Q: But when you did, would it ever be with the people from work?

A: Yeah, I guess so, oh yeah from work.

P: Ned Roberts and his wife and the one that married...

A: Yeah we used to be friends with all of them but...

Q: Because I get the impression that today that's where you make your friends but in the old days, well not even old days, 20 years ago or more, it would be from church or family or, but not so much work.

A: Well even in those days, you're friendly with them and you go out to, there used to be a lot of baby showers or wedding showers, and all this and that. You know, but you're friendly with them but not that close. You're only just friendly with a few, and we used to go to corn roast, I mean out in the woods with...

P: Like Mitzie and his wife...

A: Play cards.

P: We used to go down there and then two weeks after they would be up to our house to see who the winner was, you see.

Q: And who were these people?

P: Miskunas, that's another lithuanian name.

A: See my folks were very friendly with them. You know, when my father and all these came from Lithuania, they all bought a house right away. If anything had to be done, they all got together, paint your house, or do this and that. They never hire anybody because they didn't have the money to pay and I don't think they knew any better. So the women would cook, drink moonshine and paint the house.

P: What she's trying to get at is you and I are going on and on about the people we used to work with. That was 20-25 years ago.

A: See what held us back a lot too was Candlelight. We spent a lot of time there, working there at the bar room.

P: See we were there from 1933 to 1963 and that's where we spent the summer time and in the winter time we'd just go down weekends.

A: And when you're working, you have three boys.

P: And we used to have a great big basket of clothes every time they came down.

A: My one from Worcester Tech. used to come once a month. I didn't have no dryer and they had to wear white shirts, you know and chinos. You don't remember the chinos we had

to iron and all that. It's wonderful now, you don't have to iron. I very seldom use an iron and I had to do all their clothes. I didn't have much time with three of them and baking and cooking.

Q: And what did you say a minute or two ago about the women would get together, the men would paint the house, the women would cook. Who drank the moonshine?

A: The men.

Q: Oh, not the women?

A: I imagine some did, a little bit.

P: Some did, some had their share, but others wouldn't even touch it.

A: You know we've got some wild women in Gardner.

Q: We've got some what?

A: Wild women in Gardner. Of course we were kind of young but we had ears too.

Q: I can imagine.

A: Oh yes, especially in a small town. The women, they don't like this, oh this generation, a huh, huh, I mean, they had boyfriends and they...

Q: Well I heard at Heywood anyway, different people have told me that there was a lot of...

A: Hanky panky.

Q: Yeah, hanky panky.

A: Oh, that's right too, I'm not going to mention any names, remember in the bathroom? Got fired, no he didn't get fired, he got reprimanded. Oh a lot of hanky panky.

P: Well anyway, getting back to the social club with George Matthews in charge. He had to make sure there was enough corn for 3,000 people. 3,000, hot dogs, rolls, entertainment and make sure this outfit from Fitchburg come up and set up these great big, big tents.

A: At the Gardner Fish and Game Club.

P: Gardner Fish and Game Club. He was a busy man.

Q: And was he paid by the company to organize this?

P: Oh yeah.

A: Well he worked at Heywood.

P: He was on salary.

Q: But it was on company time that he did all this?

P: Yeah, yeah. See, he had a good job but then he started getting a little older, and getting a little heavier and he couldn't get around so much so they gave him this job, the social club. He had to go out and hire acts, you know, performers on the stage, and make sure the acts was there. He was in charge of the social club band. Everybody that worked at Heywood's that knew how to play an instrument had a chance to play in the band. Oh yeah.

A: Well he had to get the buses to get the people down there. It was really, oh everybody used to go.

P: And there was one year they organized a trip to Canobie Lake. I don't know if you know where Canobie Lake is.

Q: The amusement park?

A: New Hampshire, yeah.

P: The amusement park on the lake. Well they got their railroad trains up by Heywood Wakefield, 15-16 railroad trains, up to 2,000 people.

A: We went to Canobie Lake.

P: So they went down there, they shifted, they went into Ayre junction and from Ayre junction they shifted past Lawrence and Lowell, up through that way. We started at 8 in the morning and we got back about 8 at night.

A: Heywood's always did an awful lot for the people. I mean they were really good to the people, except well... Gardner wasn't the only one, well Gardner was really low paid. I mean, you people like in Lowell, around Boston and all that you always got better pay than Gardner. Gardner was Chair City, of course we didn't have to pay much rent. The people didn't have to pay, the people, we had a two tenement house and I think downstairs they were paying about \$22 a month, beautiful apartment, beautiful. You can't even get a, I think the rents are going a little bit, they've got to do something about that.

Q: But it's still less expensive here than in Boxboro for example, the same apartment we would have paid \$150.00 more for than we would have here, the same company.

P: I even noticed in the Gardner News a week ago Saturday, about this Francis LeBlanc, the lawyer.

A: I told her about it to read. You read that?

Q: Yeah, I have that marked out.

A: Yeah, mark it down.



P: Well anyway, he went trying to go around getting money from all the different companies to get an industrial park in here and all the big shots, Heywood's included all of them and they said, no way, we don't want all these new industries come in with higher wages. We'd lose our help. That's interesting.

Q: Because I thought they had a hard time getting help, Heywood Wakefield?

P: They did.

A: They did, so they didn't want any, GE wanted to come in, Digital wanted to come in and some other big concerns, no. See Heywood's, Simplex, I don't know about Simplex.

P: Maybe even Gem Crib.

A: Gem Crib, yeah and all these factories, no way. They kept Gardner down so that's why we are so surprised all these people are building houses here. To us it's, well just up the line they're going to build over 400 homes.

P: Just like when Heywood Wakefield when I was just, what's that word, catastrophe audience. So they scurried around all these different shops here and there. Some of them got jobs, some of them didn't. It was like a boom.

Q: Oh when it closed?

P: When they closed, yeah. Well I can imagine these people at Conant Ball. 65 or 75, they used to have over 200 at one time, without a job, amazing.

A: Gardner was never good. I mean it's, well that's why Gardner is what I call a poor town. I mean, they never made much money.

P: Well they call it a hick town.

A: Hick town, now it's bedroom town.

Q: Is it still a poor town?

A: Oh yeah, sure. I mean, you're not making much money. You go to Nichols & Stone or any of these places you're not, you're not. We don't know, maybe you know, but there's a lot of people on Welfare. Well they have to. If a guy's getting, say all right he's getting \$8.00 an hour. He's got three kids and your rent is \$500.00. How are you going to do it? You can't. Now if we didn't have this house...

P: Say you make \$300.00 a week, that's \$1,200.00 a month and you have to turn around and pay over \$600.00 for rent that leaves you \$600.00. It seems a lot but it's not. Not anymore.

A: Especially when you have kids. I mean, I feel sorry for people that have children. I really do.

P: If you go to buy kid's shoes now you pay \$35.00 to \$40.00.

Q: Oh I know and you have to buy them every three months.

A: Yeah, it's really, like my grandson got married and he's lucky that he's got my son and his wife. They have, well they just got married and in about a year's time they had one and all of a sudden well just after that she got pregnant again. Two kids, he was out of college wasn't he?

P: Huh?

A: Was Dennis out of college? Or just about. No I think he was just getting out of college, two kids.

P: He was still going, I think he was in his fourth year of electrical college.

A: Yeah and two kids. Now my son's, of course she works for four doctors. She doesn't have to work but she works there and all her money goes to the children to buy clothes, helping them out. They bought a house, they got stuck, they bought a house, there's no cellar. You know out in Virginia, everything's expensive. They even have to buy their own water, imagine that, to drink. They have to have gallons brought in so much.

P: It's a big container. The kind they have in the office.

A: They have to pay extra for electricity, some poles in a new section, I don't know. So I mean, someone has to help them out, with two small kids, two small babies. One is two and a half, Peter is two and a half and Paul is a year old. I just got a letter from her, she's taking care of two kids.

P: Plus her own two.

A: Plus two, one is nine months.

P: That's the letter she just showed you.

A: Yeah, nine months and the other one is, work part time, she's got four little kids. Well I'd go crazy.

Q: I want to ask you about one last thing before we stop and that's, you mentioned a little bit before about the union starting to come in. Can you tell me a little bit about the union's coming in to the company?

A: He maybe, I don't know.

P: Well I know at noon times I used to go to Pine Street gate to have a smoke and there's another gate on Cross Street which is around the corner. And over there on the Lake Street gate these guys from the union, united furniture union or something like that, and they're there talking to these people that are sitting out there waiting for the quarter to one whistle to blow to go in. And they kept it up, kept it up and pretty soon they started to impress the people, they were listening. You're not getting enough money, you should get this and you should get that. Finally the union heads, all those other guys around there and they went up to see Greenwood and they put it right on the table. Mr. Greenwood said, I can't support that at all. It's way out of order. You're demanding too much, you want to do less work for more money. Finally they called a meeting down to, I think it was City Hall auditorium, or the union headquarters and they voted and they passed due on strike.

Q: This is in the 60's?

P: I think so yeah. I think some place around there. Well anyway Greenwood says, okay lock the doors up, lock the gates up. In the meantime because I was on salary to retain my valuable service I got \$10.00 a week to make sure I didn't leave Heywood's.

Q: Who paid you?

P: Heywood's, Heywood Wakefield did, Greenwood, Heywood Wakefield. And the other I had to go down the unemployment office to collect what I could collect down there. They

would ask the other people who were on strike, have you looked for a job, and they'd say yeah. Then they come to me, have you looked for a job, I says, no. I says no, I'm still working for Heywood Wakefield for \$10.00 a week. Oh he says, well we can't give you much more, remember? Son of a gun but after that, after 14 weeks, of course in the meantime the company and the union got together to see if they couldn't thrash out this settlement. Finally after 14 weeks they agreed on certain things. I forget what they were now but in the meantime all our nice customers that bought our furniture, they went some other place. Like they went down to High Point, North Carolina, they went other places.

A: That's what took a lot...

P: That's the furniture, yeah. Because down there in North Carolina and South Carolina, the wages were even less than in Gardner and everything was on one floor. They didn't have to have all these big heating bills. That's why Conant Ball is getting out. It's old fashioned, it's out dated. So they took our business away and that was it. There was one salesman there, Herb Hedges Sr. and Herb Hedges Jr. they headed out to Ohio and Kentucky area. That guy was making over a million dollars a year on his commission because he was a go getter. Go here, go there, all these big stores, you know there was a motel or hotel opening up, he would go in there and everything right there in black and white with his pictures, his figures, and his specs. That's why he, I think he was a top man there.

A: Yeah, Hedges was always top man. But don't forget, we had a lot of dead heads in Heywood too.

P: Fisher and Poster became in charge of all the salesmen and they even had a credit or two.

Q: Did the union help the employees?

P: Well they just, the union helped them to get what they were asking for. Most of the stuff in the contract. And seniority is one of the best things I know of even though a friend of mine I had coming in bumped off another guy. A friend came in and bumping off my friend. But see another thing I didn't like about it too when the, Heywood's used to make a lot of bus seating, seating for buses, oh a lot of it. Well when that went out all these guys over there were making good money like Pete Menakus and Hebert and a lot of them. Well the union rules said which ever the patent you go into you've got to have at least one year's experience in that department before you can start bumping. Well it don't take long for a year to go by and pretty soon they started bumping here and bumping there and bumping here.

Q: Permanently bumping?

P: Yeah. See, say you were coming over from the bus seating department, this guy has 30 years of experience. 30 years in Heywood's. He come over here and all these guys from 30 years down, he could take any one of those jobs he wanted, any one of them.

A: And they were lazy.

P: And they were lazy too.

Q: And these were the people with seniorty that could take the other jobs?

P: With the seniority come over from that one special department, the bus seat department. The reason they lost out on bus seating was because they were doing a very poor quality work, very poor quality. Now remember Eddy Montvale across the lake?

A: Yeah.

P: He had three or four of the guys that sometimes would go on a trip two or three weeks to fix up the bus seats and what they called the scratches, what they rested on. That cost money. Pretty soon the, I think it was the yellow truck out in Ohio that way, they said, heck with you, we'll go some other place and get out bus seating done and done right. See, they were very slack, very slack. They didn't care as long as they got their money.

A: But they were afraid to lose their job. Then they started bumping somebody else off. They were lazy.

P: Joe, what was his name?

A: Another one, barely moving around.

P: He would watch, John was another one.

Q: These were all people from the bus seat department?

P: Yeah and a lot of the jobs on special buses they'd get finished by 4:00, and they could. You know, they'd go down and have a smoke. Pretty soon they'd be working 8, 9 o'clock at night overtime. That ruining it too.

A: How about people going out and somebody punching your clock, a lot of that going on.

Q: Oh somebody would already be gone and somebody else would punch out for you?

P: I know one guy, a very good friend of Ann and mine, he'd come to work on Saturday mornings. My office was right there so I could see. He'd work until about quarter of eight, give him his card, go all the way down to Otter River, pick his wife up at Goodnow Pearson in Gardner and then he would come back into Heywood Wakefield about 10:30 and then at 11:00 he would punch out and go home. Abuse, not all of them done it but some did, very abusive.

A: A lot of stealing going on too.

Q: Of furniture? When this union activity started did people see that as something to help them or they didn't care or they supported or didn't support it?

P: I think the union went 60% to 40%. I think 60% liked it and I suppose the other 40% resented it because certain things like in the wood shop, Pete could tell you more but...

A: Oh yeah, my cousin Pete, he's the one I told you about.

Q: Pete Sweet?

A: No Pete Matusnik, my cousin, a bachelor.

P: One thing the union didn't get away with was favoritism. Anything that was favoritism amongst the foremen with some of their guys that they like, well the fellows would go to



the union, union headquarters and make out a report and this and that. This guy got called in and was told cut it out, treat them all a like.

Q: How did you feel about the union coming in?

P: I liked it to the extent of seniority only, the bumping business. I had no say either way.

Q: Oh because the office wasn't involved with the union?

P: And then when the union started up people could join up. It was their wish or whatever you want to call it, to join the union or not join the union. There would be no retaliation against the ones that didn't join. But everybody after that would have to join to get in.

Q: They had to?

P: Had to, what's it called, a closed shop they called it?

A: Yeah.

P: Because I remember this Mary LeBlanc. Oh she was dead set against the union. I'm not going to sign up. They tried to do a job on her. No way. She went to see the union. She went to see Greenwood. She spelled it right out, cut out that stuff.

Q: And she didn't join.

P: No. As I said, when the union first came in, you had a chance to join or not to join.

A: And she never joined.

P: She never joined because a lot of others didn't join but 60% did, about that average I guess.

Q: And there wasn't any union activity before the 60's?

P: Not much. Some say it was a good thing they got in there. I disagree.

A: I believe in that seniority. I really do. I believe in that but you had to pay so darn much money for the union. And what do you get when they're going out they can't help you. When you're on strike they don't even, well...

P: Well here's another case too, like Pete Packus' father, when these things would come down stairs and the girls would pack them with cardboard. Well in the old days they used to put a wooden shook or a crate right around it to protect this and all that. Well when Lauren Brandon come in he got his friend Joe Simino, because Simino used to feed him this, feed him money. So he fires one Lithuanian and gets another Lithuanian in there. He fired Minakus to put his friend in. Now with a union you cannot do that.

A: And that's wrong. You shouldn't be doing that.

P: And when Joe Simino got in there, what Minakus used to do in 40 hours, well it took him sometimes 60 hours. And as a matter of fact he was looking for help.

A: Well cause he was feeding big money.

P: He'd go like that Chris, I need help, I need help.